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Bulletin #105: [Partial update, new resources, and request for your financial support](#)

December 17, 2010

Bulletin 103a (11/29/10, [now renumbered 104 on our web site](#)) was a request to attend a Santa Fe County Commission meeting and to otherwise work with NM local government to secure a new environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed \$5-6 billion (B) plutonium complex at Los Alamos. Delivery of that bulletin was delayed 3 days by our list server -- it came to you two days after the meeting in question. The good news is that [Santa Fe County unanimously requested a new EIS for the project!](#)

Dear friends, colleagues, and others --

Email is an unsatisfactory basis for political action, for all sorts of reasons that shouldn't need too much explanation. These are not ordinary times. We need more than this very impersonal medium to discuss, formulate, and carry out the work of preserving our communities and their environment.

I and others here would like to speak to more of you *personally*. That can't happen unless we each make a significant personal effort. All we can do in this *Bulletin*, like the ones which have preceded it, is to invite you into fruitful, face-to-face dialogue and participation.

Nevertheless, if you read this Bulletin and find it useful, please forward it to people you think will find it useful, and recommend that they [subscribe](#). The only way names are added to this list is by people subscribing themselves.

Some of you have taken advantage of our offers to speak and lead discussions in your church, college classroom, or other group; some of you have come to our public events, social happenings, and more intimate working sessions, or joined us in speaking or in silent witness as the occasion has offered. We have enjoyed the solidarity; it has also been productive.

*Dr. Frank von Hippel, Program on Science and Global Security, Princeton University:
 "The Los Alamos Study Group (LASG) plays a unique role in the nuclear-weapons policy debate. Its Director, Greg Mello, understands more deeply than any other independent expert the plans and policy initiatives of the nation's nuclear-weapon laboratories as they try to construct a future of planned obsolescence and continual renewal for the U.S. nuclear-weapon arsenal. He is a precious early warning system and strategic advisor for those of us who propose, in contrast, a future in which the U.S. nuclear stockpile is steadily reduced and increasingly marginalized in U.S. security policy considerations."*

One of the features of our cultural situation is that, unbeknownst to many, it has become difficult to convene meetings. "Difficult" translates into expensive, which means unaffordable. Face-to-face meetings with groups of people have become rare and precious, as economic hardship and other factors drive people into solitude and the apolitical (Greek: "idiotic") life. Meetings and "events" are quietly becoming the province of the monied classes who can afford expensive venues, and this has had a highly-deleterious effect on content. The cult of celebrity and the often-unconscious expectation of entertainment have all but replaced politics, leaving the hollow shell of "elections" manipulated by vast sums of money and the propaganda it buys.

These considerations and many others lie behind our request to you to convene groups of your friends, or take the social risks involved in broaching the serious topics we have raised at your church or in other organizations to which you may belong. Invite us -- we will come. We are seeing a

Danielle Brian, Executive Director, Project On Government Oversight: "The Los Alamos Study Group consistently produces serious, solid analysis that we can count on. Their work has been instrumental in our understanding the on-the-ground impact of Los Alamos operations."

dramatic decline of politically-relevant sophistication and knowledge in our communities, to levels far below what can sustain democracy.

The Los Alamos Study Group comprises a highly-knowledgeable and committed "truth squad." Our staff and board have about 200 years of combined experience in activism, public policy, and the sciences, and have considerable depth in relevant disciplines. We're not into propoganda or using people.

Just so you know, these bulletins go to about 1,800 people, but few of these are really active. We have to be careful about what we say because some of our readers seek to thwart our efforts, and for other reasons. The diversity of views and situations on this list is enormous. We can't convey but a tiny, shallow fraction of what we have to offer on this list. We are here to serve you, whether you are in government or in our communities. You have to ask.

There is a great deal of news and activity to report to you, but before doing that I must ask again for your financial support. Many of you are already standing with us, which is why we have so much progress to report. THANK YOU. A relatively easy way to amplify your support is to talk us up with possible donors and friends. In New Mexico for sure, and presumably elsewhere, there is very little difference between fundraising and political organizing. If people of means aren't willing to put their money where their hopes lie, those hopes tend to disappear -- for everybody. New Mexico is a small state, and [Kevin Bacon's six degrees of separation](#) is usually more like two or three.

One of the principal features of our time -- being past the peak of our global empire and the riches that go with it, past peak oil, peak disposable time, peak democracy, peak climate, peak water, and so on -- is that our unconscious assumption that somebody else is taking care of whatever it is, is now more likely to be wrong than ever before. Now, if each of us doesn't act, it's quite possible nobody will. Where so many have left the field, large outcomes are contingent on small actions. If we do act, others will join in, including powerful others. Many of us who are not used to leading and taking the first steps now have to pick up the burden of leadership and experience the mature fulfillment that comes with it. The reverse is terribly true as well: if we don't speak up for ourselves, others won't come to our aid. That includes political help from outside New Mexico and it includes funding -- including funding for the Los Alamos Study Group. Everybody, including funders, likes the comfort of groups.

If you are not already a Study Group donor, your gift -- whether small or large, one-time or as part of a monthly sustaining donor commitment -- will also bring you a richer stream of information about what's going on in the Study Group, and tell you more about what you can do to help us, or join with us, than we send to this broad list.

So please, take just a moment and [make a donation on-line](#) or, better, send a check to the office. Or you can [write Trish](#), or call her at 505-265-1200, to arrange a gift of stock or make any other special arrangements.

Now for the informational part of this Bulletin.

So much is happening and there are so many opportunities at hand, that it may be necessary to break up this Bulletin into multiple ones and send them to you over the next few days, if time allows.

By the way, if you've noticed, we don't take time to summarize events and news, or provide too many opinions separate from what you personally might do. There are plenty of ways to get news and if you are interested enough you will find them. What we are offering is far beyond news. We are providing a fact- and value-based vehicle by which you can become an empowered, sophisticated participant, linked and acting in solidarity with others. Too much information -- even good information -- or opinion not linked with mutual commitment and action, is useless and empty.

The rest of this Bulletin, in a nutshell:

1. The New Mexico congressional delegation is undermining the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA), a cornerstone of U.S. environmental law, by tacitly encouraging, through their supportive silence, the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars in the next few months in very detailed, final design for the [Los Alamos plutonium project](#)

Steve Leeper, Chairman, Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation: "Los Alamos Study Group (LASG) has, as Russ Wellen put it, "shot an arrow into the beating heart of the nuclear weapons industry."

In August this year LASG and its highly esteemed legal team filed suit to bring the ... CMRR-NF ... to a screeching halt.

Attempted derailment of this project is taking place at Los Alamos, USA, where the first A-bomb was made. The intended outcome is to keep the \$6 billion bomb-making project, the most expensive nuclear weapons industry undertaking since the Manhattan Project, from being built. But lawsuits are expensive, and LASG needs our help now.

Your financial contribution will help stop this grossly dangerous, counterproductive waste of land, scientific talent, and money that threatens the very possibility of life on this planet. A defeat in Los Alamos will set a precedent, putting governments across the globe on notice that they must heed the voice of humanity and forgo nuclear weapons production in favor of life-sustaining projects."

without [an applicable EIS](#) (pdf). [You can help educate them.](#) We seldom encourage "ordinary" citizens to write our congressional delegation, or even meet with junior staffers whose job it is to absorb and dispose of citizen concerns, because such campaigns very seldom mean or achieve anything. To be effective, it is essential to recruit supportive action from important donors and political supporters, to demand accountability from elected representatives in the press, and so on.

Our senators have even claimed credit for helping set up a bogus "Supplemental" EIS (SEIS) process to provide an appearance of reconsidering the project while it advances. [It is up to citizens to hold our elected officials to account, by asking them to halt the project pending completion of a new EIS that considers all reasonable alternatives, just as the law requires.](#)

Above the local level, we don't have more than a sliver of democracy left in this state, which in addition to being subject to national trends eroding our democracy, also harbors unique and profoundly anti-democratic institutions, chief among them being our giant weapons laboratories, that undermine representative government at every opportunity. Our democracy has to be rebuilt from the ground up, and that means our engagement with village, city, tribal, and county governments, and with state legislators. It means learning about issues and being able to talk to others. Our major newspapers and media outlets seldom if ever *help* (as opposed to *hurt*) when it comes to the state's dominant exploitative corporations and government entities, and they tend to be allergic to issues that could affect their own corporate investments or the social standing of their owners and editors. Like the rest of us, they are only human and do not understand the issues involved -- because we have not found effective and persuasive ways to educate them. That is a hint.

2. The Department of Energy (DOE), the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), and the White House have been telling Congress they are "unequivocally" committed to building the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF) at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), [no matter what the cost](#) (pdf). Meanwhile the [Department of Justice \(DOJ\), DOE, and NNSA are telling a federal judge the exact opposite](#) (pdf) -- that they have no commitment to the project! [You can help expose them.](#) Our newspapers have refused to write about this contradiction so far. It is too *controversial*, too *scary* to actually name and criticize the many lies of the federal government that enable this \$5.8 billion project, especially when all of our congressional delegation wants silence or support so the project can proceed as fast as possible!
3. All the evidence in our lawsuit over the lack of NEPA compliance for CMRR-NF, and all the legal briefs, are now on [our web](#)

[site](#) in a convenient form. You can use this information to powerfully inform yourself and others. Our briefs and evidence provide a good summary of the issues. We want to try this case in public as well as in court. The Obama White House and three federal agencies are bending every effort to roll over environmental law (and over New Mexico) in their rush to create a factory for manufacturing new (note: new!) kinds of nuclear weapons.

From a factory manager: ...Your clarity on the issues; your practical opposition to nuclear weapons and your persistent hard work are much appreciated... At this time of year when our culture celebrates the coming of a Saviour it certainly seems more in keeping with the spirit of the season to use our money to work to bring down the empire than to buy more stuff that we do not need.

4. [Official requests for a new EIS by local governments, tribes](#), and by federal and state agencies are extremely important. You can help secure them! The sooner the better. Both the City and the County of Santa Fe have [unanimously requested](#) a new EIS for the CMRR-NF at LANL. Kudos to Commissioner Holian for introducing and carrying this important resolution through the recent County process. Mayor David Coss and councilors Patti Bushee and Matt Ortiz were the ones that stepped forward in City government. *Thanks so much for all who worked for this important outcome.*
5. Some local governments, including tribes, have joined and are funding a new regional government entity, set up by a Joint Powers Agreement, called "[The Regional Coalition of LANL Communities](#)," the purpose of which is to lobby Congress for LANL programs and funding using [pooled municipal and county \(i.e. local taxpayer\) funds](#), while providing a forum for LANL propaganda. You can help upset this poison apple! [Here's an exposé](#) by Wren Abbott at the [Santa Fe Reporter](#). This new regional government is primarily responsible to Los Alamos County, since that County provides three-fourths of the funding. Darwin BondGraham and I attended and filmed a meeting of the Coalition, and we saw how Los Alamos County was running the show. We saw how LANL representatives took up most of the meeting with presentations, including a deceptive presentation extolling the wonders of CMRR-NF, omitting to include any problems or impacts and omitting to provide any clear explanation of the purpose of the facility (because the presenters "didn't know;" they were only following orders; policy matters were "above their pay grade"). Los Alamos County Commissioner Mike Wheeler explained that the new regional government Coalition is "a LANL advocacy group," set up "so the Laboratory can do what it needs to do." It is explicitly set up to overcome citizen opposition and concerns. This new joint government, if allowed to continue, would represent a united, pro-LANL front in the halls of power from northern New Mexico, essentially negating any contrary official opinion or resolution that might be expressed by any participating government, and any but the tamest and most subservient "citizen" action. It is a very important loss of local sovereignty and citizenship. The only person present who expressed concern was Mayor Coss, who said he was quite uncomfortable subsuming the identity of Santa Fe beneath that of LANL and said the City, officially and in its population, did not much support the nuclear weapons mission of LANL. Nevertheless Santa Fe, the City and County both, are poised to fund a lobbyist in Washington to promote LANL.

Candy Jones, filmmaker & canine trainer: "In the last few months the Los Alamos Study Group HAS made a difference in their lawsuit seeking to halt this insidious and illegal project [CMRR-NF]... Protect New Mexico from the even more draconian policies this white house has surprisingly embraced. Our President speaks of nuclear disarmament while earmarking more of your tax dollars for the creation of new nuclear warheads than any President since the Manhattan Project of 1943... Choose gratitude and peace this holiday season. Choose Life, donate to the Los Alamos Study Group for yourself, for me, for your children, for your conscience, or just because it might just be the best investment you can make in today's world."

The notion that one can promote *just* "green" or "clean" or "pure scientific" missions at LANL is laughable. Where are those missions, by the way?

If you live in northern New Mexico, please contact your County, City, and tribal officials, as applicable, and express your opposition to this joint powers agreement. The funding is a problem, but the Coalition is a big problem even without pooling taxpayer funds. At the same time you can [ask about progress](#) toward a resolution asking for a new EIS for CMRR-NF and a halt to further investment in the project until a new EIS is completed. Good talking points and other materials are [here](#) and [here](#). Here are links to [Taos](#), [Rio Arriba](#), and [Sandoval](#) county governments. You can brief yourself using these new "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)" (pdf), which is up-to-date. This is the single best resource we have for most citizens right now. Remember, a resolution asking for a full, proper EIS would not express opposition to the project. It would only ask NNSA to follow the law. To repeat, our lawsuit gives citizens a big megaphone on this issue. Please use it! This is not "business as usual!" This single building would use more than twice the steel used in the Eiffel Tower. It will cost almost as much as the [total assessed value of all real estate in Santa Fe County in 2008 \(\\$6.4 billion\)](#) (pdf). It will require something like 1/10 of the concrete used in Hoover Dam. It is by far the largest government project in the history of New Mexico, except the interstate highways.

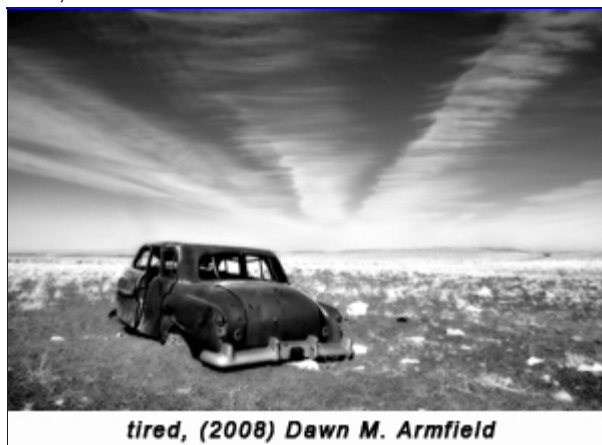
6. If you do not live in these environmentally affected areas, [call or write your congressperson and senator and ask them to halt funding](#) for this outrageous project.
7. We have prepared and sent to Congress and to [DOE's advisors](#) (pdf) a concise summary of some [reasonable alternatives](#)

[to the CMRR-NF](#) (pdf).

8. Is the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research (CMR) building "old" -- or [is it just not being maintained](#) (pdf) as suggested in this recent [op-ed by Study Group president Peter Neils](#) in the *Albuquerque Journal*?
9. Columnist Russ Wellen has published some complementary lines about the Study Group, which also reveal some of how we work and what we want: "The Front Line of Disarmament: Blocking a Nuclear Facility Six Times the Cost of the Manhattan Project," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Russ Wellen, blog, Nov 29, 2010 (also here: [Counterpunch](#), [The Faster Times](#), [The Huffington Post](#), [Scholars & Rogues](#), [Newshoggers](#), and the [Agonist](#).)
10. A little bird tells us that [midnight convoys of nuclear materials](#) (not waste) through greater Santa Fe and beyond have greatly increased. Is it a sign of things to come, or just a temporary surge? What is being shipped, and to where? We don't know. We'll skip the recent (and earlier) revelations of problems in the security forces, and the stories and photos of our own personal encounters with these convoys. They aren't that important from the policy perspective. Just interesting. These convoys come are pretty much mobile, heavily-armed, constitution-free zones.
11. In addition to [the new section of our CMRR web page devoted to local government action](#) (*please get involved!*), and [the updated legal section](#) with oodles of concise information (see under "references," for example), we have put references to NNSA's most current planning and budgeting documents [here](#). You can see where senators Kyl and Corker want to go in this Nov 24, 2010 memo ("[Progress in Defining Nuclear Modernization Requirements](#)," pdf). The debate over New START ratification and all it means to nuclear weapons issues has been discussed in articles by Study Group board members Darwin BondGraham ("[Nuking the Social Contract](#)," *Counterpunch* Dec 3-5, 2010) and Andy Lichterman ("[The START Treaty and Disarmament: a Dilemma in Search of a Debate](#)," pdf, Dec 2010). I myself have explained these issues until blue in the face with national and international colleagues, some of whom are now shocked (shocked!) at the political cost of ratification. No kidding! Most disarmament professionals have looked the other way and ignored the facts. After all, what's so very wrong with "modernization?" Most organizational budgets are dependent on foundation funders working directly or indirectly with the U.S. government, the Democratic Party, and the Obama Administration, as nearly all U.S. foundations working in the arms control and disarmament field are these days.
12. A terrific brand-new resource on the interrelationship of peak oil, climate, and the future of civilization is now available. Written at a small institute at UC Santa Barbara by Tariel Mórrígan under the leadership of Richard Falk, it's called [Peak Energy, Climate Change, and the Collapse of Global Civilization: the Current Peak Oil Crisis](#). This is the general terrain we covered in 6 months of breakfast seminars in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. You can download this interesting and useful book for free.

Information about peak oil, to the extent it is understood and disseminated, is highly undermining of the existing planet-destroying capitalist system (not to put too fine a point on the matter). For this reason, it has been kept more secret than nuclear weapons design. You can download or purchase books on how to make basic atomic bombs, a challenge which has been reduced to the level of smart undergraduates, but the Department

of Energy (DOE) and other departments of government have largely kept knowledge of peak oil as secret as possible. As David Fridley, an oil economist who worked under DOE Secretary Steven Chu, is quoted in this book as saying, "[Dr. Chu] knows all about peak oil, but he can't talk about it. If the government announced that peak oil was threatening our economy, Wall Street would crash. He just can't say anything about it." This is not any kind of flaky conspiracy, friends. Governments understand perfectly well what is going on, from Cheney's 2001 Energy Task Force onwards. This is not the place for a treatise on this topic, but it informs everything we do at the Study Group. The risk of more war, uncontrollable war, is much higher than most people think, and rising. In many ways that war has already begun. The CMRR-NF is all about seizing the high ground in a time of economic decline -- heavily vesting government in upgrades to the nuclear enterprise before the house falls down. In a few years, such vast fiscal waste may be unthinkable, unless we have a new Cold War to go along with the hot ones -- which is not at all "unthinkable," given Russia's strong energy position vis-a-vis Europe. That's why so many parties want to get started with construction now. Later may be too late, for them.



tired, (2008) Dawn M. Armfield

Please join with us, and encourage your friends to do so also, by sending a blank email to lasg-subscribe@lists.riseup.net.

In solidarity,

Greg, Trish & all the gang at LASG

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